

Board of Selectmen – October 17, 2011

Present Searle Tsagaris, Gibbs, Babson, Dugan

Also present: Larsen, Ketchen, Robinson

Meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m.

Warrants approved: 2012-014 (\$3,487,628.58)

2012-015 (\$2,623,100.90)

Ms. Searle announced that the Health Department will be holding a flu clinic on Saturday.

2. Executive Director's Update

Mr. Larsen noted there will be no action under Article 7 at November 14, 2011 Special Town Meeting. There will also be no action under Article 12 as it will be deferred until a later town meeting. The Board will be considering relevant articles at the next several meetings. An agreement has been reached with firefighters which will be discussed on October 31 along with other articles that pertain to the contract. Article 11 (VW Parcel) should also be ready on October 31. We will not take up the issue of farmers market at the Special Town Meeting as no action is required.

3. Fuller Brook Park

Rosemary Donohue, Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee and Bob White, FBPCC, Vice Chair presented. Rosemary Donohue briefly spoke about the FBPCC seeking CPC for funds in the amount of \$665,000 for the Phase 3 final design of the Fuller Brook Park Project and the CPC voted to approve the request. Ms. Donohue gave a brief history of Fuller Brook Park and its importance to the town and what will happen if the park is not properly maintained. \$473,000 of the \$665,000 is designated for a Phase 3 Consultant, which will be led by BETA Engineering. The budget provides \$86,400 for a project manager, and Steve Fader has agreed to assume that role. An additional \$20,000 has been designated for survey and topographical work that may come up. There is a 14.6% contingency. Phase 3 will take approximately two years. They hope to come to the Selectmen for support of Phase 4. Bill Charlton and Mike Pakstis joined the panel.

Questions from the Board were addressed.

The Board voted unanimously to support the request by the FBPCC for CPC funds in the amount of \$665,000.

4. Tax Classification Public Meeting

Ms. Searle went over the ground rules for the meeting then handed the meeting over to Ellen Gibbs. Gibbs went over purpose and format of meeting. The tax classification hearing is tentatively scheduled for December 5, 2011. Ms. Gibbs welcomed the staff from Assessors. Hans Larsen, Rachel Lopes and Christopher Ketchen presented. Mr. Ketchen and Hans Larsen (weighted average cost per sq foot) presented a brief presentation to pick up on where he left off from the 9/26 meeting. Mr. Larsen gave a recap of some findings that came up in last presentation and talked about where we would go from here.

Questions from the Board were addressed.

Jim Miller, Wellesley resident presented. Mr. Miller presented the tax situation from a historical perspective over the last 25 years. Commercial owner's property tax burden has decreased 32% compared to residential property owner. The increase in residential property values directly benefits the commercial property owners by significantly reducing commercial property tax burden and increasing commercial property values. He believes the implementation of the dual tax rate would return residential and commercial property owners share of the tax burden back to where it was 25 years ago.

Questions from the Board were addressed.

Maura O'Brien, Chamber of Commerce President and Peter Ashton, consultant from the Chamber of Commerce presented. Ms. O'Brien stated she continues to hear from business owners that they are very concerned. Mr. Ashton gave a summary of the consequences to commercial property owners by going to a split tax rate. Mr. Ashton presented slides showing comparable CIP tax bills. A split tax rate would not improve expressed objectives and would drive down the value of commercial property. Mr. Ashton can see no logical or compelling reason to move to a split tax rate.

Questions from the Board were addressed.

Comments from the Public were received.

Bill Mone, 75 Abbott Road, Wellesley resident for 32+years Town Meeting Member, practices real estate law in town and has familiarity with real estate values and tax bills. Expressed view that people choose Wellesley because they like the community the beauty of the town, prestige facto and the schools. Wellesley tax bills tend to be very reasonable for comparable values in other towns. Talked about vacant offices and storefronts and would be cautious about going to a dual rate in our current economic climate. We will pay for the increased taxes.

Rick Ramos, 11 Pine Street, Wellesley resident for 7 years. Mr. Ramos feels the town since 2004 has been slipping. Moved here also for vibrant business community and downtown. He believes it comes down how to get to value point for both sides. As a resident he is willing to pay more taxes for more value. As a community, businesses and residents are in it together and need to work together.

Kimberly Kissam, 41 Central Street owner of Isabelle Harvey. She would like to be in Wellesley for many years but the tax increase will be tough. She believes the dual tax will be a massive burden on small boutique shops in Wellesley. She doesn't want to make cuts and have her business suffer. She will have to reconsider next move with her business here if the tax rate changes.

Joe Grignaffini 148 Linden Street. Wellesley resident for 77 years. Town Meeting Member for 50 years. Owns two commercial properties on Linden Street has owned for 40 years. Tenants told him if tax increases do go up they will be forced to look elsewhere.

Chris Keyes, 2 Woodlawn Oval, grew up in Wellesley. Moved back here for great town. Thinks lots of things in town could be better. It's all about determining what is equitable in scenario. Decide what is and how do we get there.

Delissa Prideaux, 75 Emerson Road. Lived here 11 years with 2 kids in school system. She has seen cuts to school budget residents are paying because of cuts. Talked about all the cuts that the residents now have to pay for. It needs to be equitable doesn't want to put all burden on residents but time to even out the burden.

Dennis DiSchino, 37 Linden Street. He pays for his prop on Central Street for single story building close to 6 dollars per square foot. Would be up to \$9 with a dual rate. Single story building taxed at higher rate per square foot than multi story building. New retailers are not looking at rent they are looking at how much revenue they can generate and they can't justify opening store because they will not be able to generate enough revenue. McMansions have been revenue burdens on town.

Linda Evans Shotkus, Owner of Lyn Evans, Church Street. Core of a community is business community. Have been doing business for 31 years. Burden on taxes falls on retailer in business community. Had a business in Lexington in 80s and when they went to a split tax rate they moved their business to Concord.

Brad Perry, representative of Holman Trust which owns the Church Square block. Properties have been owned by same family through 3 generations for 85 years. Residential owners pay more because there properties have become more valuable. History is irrelevant we are living in present and have to make a decision in coming fiscal year. Commercial property owners provide wonderful services to residents. Commercial property owners also benefit from the residents. If we go to split taxation will have a large cost imposed on them will make business/buildings worth less. This will be a huge detriment to business community.

Alison Allen 33 Ridge Hill Farm Road resident for last 11 years. Selectmen are facing difficult problem. Town needs to generate more revenue to maintain the town that it's been and could be. Looks at dual tax as a way of addressing an overall revenue issue and a need to create more funding for the town.

Mary Butler represents Haynes Management; they own properties in Wellesley, Newton and Lexington. Actual taxes paid are similar for three towns because assessed values in Wellesley are double the assessed values in other towns. They feel that the single tax is fair in comparison to other towns. Their tenants have delayed renewals or asked for short term extensions until this issue is resolved. Dual tax will create more vacancies. Existing single tax rate is fair.

Dario Fauza, 19 Boulder Road wants to focus on process than matter itself. This process is not representative of the residents. Urging the board to use all means at disposal to gauge popularity of proposal.

David Himmelberger, 387 Linden. Feels there is a disconnect between what the Selectmen are charged with doing and what people think outcome of what they can do could be. Wellesley is already in the middle of the dual tax towns. To suggest that somehow that allocation 25 years ago is something to strive for is nonsense. Misleading to suggest that commercial taxes have gone down. False paradigm that if we do not have dual tax we will have to have cuts. Worried dual tax will tear at tapestry of town.

Ms. Gibbs concluded the session.

5. 8:30 P. M. FY13 Budget Guidelines

Hans Larsen, Sheryl Strother and Rachel Lopes presented. Hans briefly stated that several meetings have been held regarding establishing guidelines. Hans gave a brief presentation to show where we stand now. Showed FY13 assumptions, our current baseline, FY13 spending increases, proposed guidelines for departments other than the schools, proposed process for establishing guidelines for the schools, capital guidelines and then explained the next steps.

Questions from the board were addressed.

6. 8:50 P. M. Farmer's Market

Taken off agenda

7. 9:00 P. M. Boston Marathon – Invitational Entry Applications

Terri Tsagaris presented. The Boston Athletic Association made applications available to the town as a way of thank communities. Goal is to allow for town to raise money for charities. In order to make process participatory this year will accept applications from various charities that would like to be considered. Have drafted an application which will be available on website. Nov. 4 is deadline for applications which can either be sent in or delivered to the Selectmen's office. Selectmen will view applications and determine which charity or charities will be allocated marathon numbers. There will also be a notice in Townsman and on Patch.

Questions from the board were addressed.

Projects and Other Updates

- Wellesley High School

Draw attention to pave plaza program. Can purchase brick and engrave it to be placed in plaza in front of the school.

- Senior Center

A small group of reps from council on aging and selectmen continues to meet to explore options and a time table. Will have more info in coming future

- Wellesley Square Initiative

Next meeting with merchants is November 2.

- Advisory Committee Update

No update

- Fuller Brook Park

No update

- Public Transportation Study

Making rounds to various boards for their feedback.

- Regional Matters

At the Norfolk County Advisory Board meeting last week they approve spending 28 million dollars to put a large addition on Norfolk county agricultural school. State is going to pay 15 million dollars and the county is going to pay 13 million dollars it will

not be an increase to our contribution to the county as the funding will come out of existing capital.

- Sustainability
Last week committee endorse the recommendation of the public transportation working group to join the metro west RTA and establish a permanent transportation analysis group. Recommendations have been transmitted to the board from the committee

Old Business/ New Business

New business Ms. Searle noted that there would be a Traffic and Parking hearing at next week's meeting. The Selectmen's Office is hosting a traffic meeting for Atwood and Elmwood residents on Tuesday, October 18, 2011.

Executive Session Contemplated

At 10:10pm, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting.